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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father God, in the fret and fever of these challenging times when we know not what a day may bring forth, we thank You for this quiet moment when all else is shut out and our hearts are uplifted to You. Lord, we cannot make better laws or a better world except as we are better people.

Inspire our lawmakers to make and keep their inner lives pure and kind and just. Show them what You desire for this Nation and world, and help them to be faithful agents for bringing Your will to pass.

Correct our mistakes, redeem our failures, and confirm our right actions. Lord, crown this day with the benediction of Your peace.

We pray in Your wonderful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, over the past several years, we have seen a very disturbing practice which is becoming commonplace in the Republican-domi-

nated U.S. Congress. Governing by brinkmanship, manufactured crisis, flirting with deadlines, a game of chicken—we can call it whatever we want, but Republicans are doing it. Governing by crisis is a modus operandi of the modern Republican Party. We saw it in 2011, as the newly elected Republican majority in the House pushed the U.S. Government to the threshold of shutdown and default, and again with the so-called fiscal cliff in 2012—financial brinkmanship for our whole country—and then, of course, the infamous government shutdown that actually did occur in 2013, and it occurred over a period of several weeks and was devastating to our economy.

But since the Republicans assumed control of the Senate earlier this year, the brinkmanship in the Halls of the Capitol has become unbearable. Recall what happened this past February. ISIS had just burned a man alive in a cage. We saw that. The world saw that. The tragic Charlie Hebdo shooting had just occurred a month earlier in France, and that spilled over into Belgium, where more people were killed. Belgium authorities were making sweeping arrests of terror cells, and ISIS was threatening us in our homeland. Three Brooklyn men were arrested for trying to join ISIS here in our homeland. Yet, in this tumultuous environment, Senate Republicans brought the American Government within hours of a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security. This is a Cabinet-level office that was created during the Bush administration, the Agency responsible for the safety of each American in our homeland. It was stunning.

But even more stunning is the fact that they keep doing it over and over again. This past week, it happened with the expiration of the important PATRIOT Act provisions. A few Senators wanted to offer some amendments on that legislation. That is all it was—amendments. In fact, on the Fri-

day night of the debate, one Senator said: I will take two amendments. We on this side agreed—two amendments. Nope. Can't do that. And so, again, brinkmanship. The PATRIOT Act is a law that helps keep terrorists from attacking America. Would it have been asking too much to have a little bit of time to debate this issue? We were not given that time.

The Republican leadership knew for years that these programs were scheduled to expire on June 1, 2015. People who didn't like this act—and there were a number of them—gave speeches all over the country talking about the act. It was no secret that the act was not that popular in some people's minds.

Last year, Senator MCCONNELL knew this deadline was looming when he prevented the Senate from debating another version of the USA FREEDOM Act by conducting one of their hundreds of filibusters stopping President Obama's efforts. And the majority leader knew a month ago that the deadline was coming and chose to prioritize other legislation over these critical programs. So what happened? The authority for these sensitive programs expired.

Yesterday, we passed the USA FREEDOM Act, reestablishing these important terror-fighting provisions with some improvements in them. But for 2 days, America had its guard down. Every minute that passed from that lapse to passage of the USA FREEDOM Act was an unnecessary gamble with our national security. And for what? What did the Republicans achieve by letting these provisions lapse?

This is no way to govern—using legislative deadlines as some kind of ransom, staggering from one catastrophe to another.

Now on the horizon are two more important deadlines for legislation that is important to the American people—the Export-Import Bank and the Federal highway program. And what are we

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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